

Basic Principles of News Article Writing For Scientific Staff of KVKs



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Introduction:

Extension work uses communication for its leverage and may be therefore communication is regarded as heart of entire extension process. Communication is a process of sharing thoughts, ideas, feelings information etc. which results into common understanding. This common understanding and clarity of meaning is very crucial for conveying scientific information of public utility. This job becomes bit harder when scientific personnel writes something for farmers. This publication aims at improving farmer friendly writing style of KVK personnel. It will also help to communicate activities of KVKs among masses. In rural areas, print media plays crucial role in creating awareness and dissemination information. Therefore, change agents must write and communicate science for the benefit of all.

What is news article?

News is the communication of selected information on current events or may be a story linked with past events. It is shared in various ways such as discussion among individuals, newsletters, publishing, broadcasting on television, radio or social media etc. Any article which communicates news may be through Print media (Ex. News paper, Newsletter, farm magazines etc.) or via online media (Ex. e-news paper, e-news letter, blogs, websites etc.) is called news article. News articles are mainly of informative nature written for larger audiences.

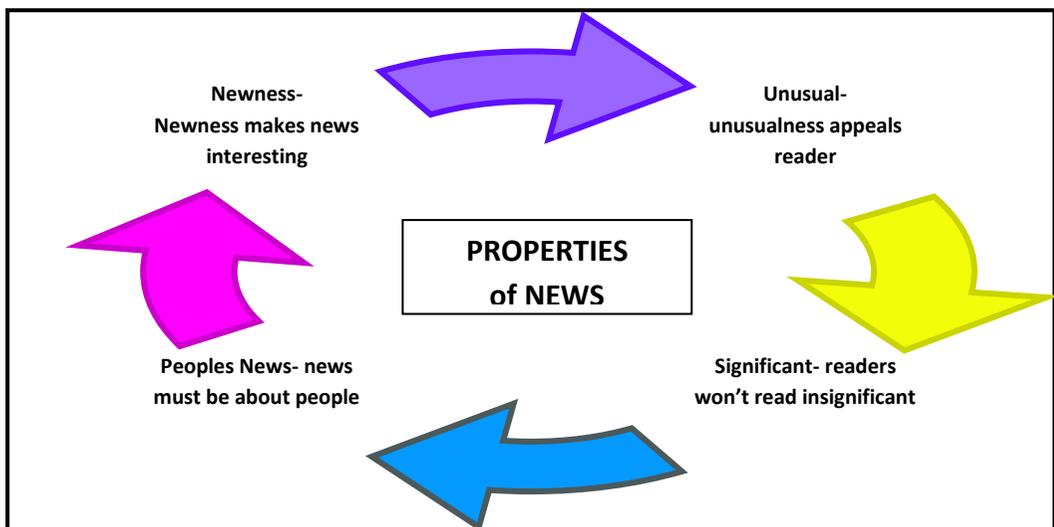


Fig. 1.1: Properties of news

News must have property of newness. Any routine activity like “I can swim” cannot become news. But if “I can swim faster than Dolphin” then definitely it becomes

news because it is interesting for readers. Moreover if news is unusual then it catches attention of reader and appeals him/her to read. For example “farmer purchased tractor” it is usual story for us but if “farmer in *sohra* village brought an aircraft” it becomes unusual news.

Third essential property of news is about its significance. “Farmers are growing rice” may seem less significant to read but “farmers are growing diabetes resistance rice” holds attention. One more property of news is it should be about people. The news must cater the needs of masses, may be of immediate or future use. For instance “scientists found meteoroid at Antarctica” is not so catchy or compelling because reader searches for his benefit. However “scientists found EBOLLA killer property in meteoroid at Antarctica” becomes breaking news as it can save life of lots of people. Thus, for the appealing and catchy reporting we must ensure all four properties in news articles.

How to write news article?

Experts say that writing a good news article is a skill that can be acquired and developed overtime. The good news article is a mixture of all four properties of news blended with right words at right time to cater the real time purpose. Understanding some tricks and techniques about news reporting can enable us for writing good news article and popular articles in news papers.

A. structure of news article: Inverted pyramid style of writing the news articles is strongly recommended Journalism specialists.

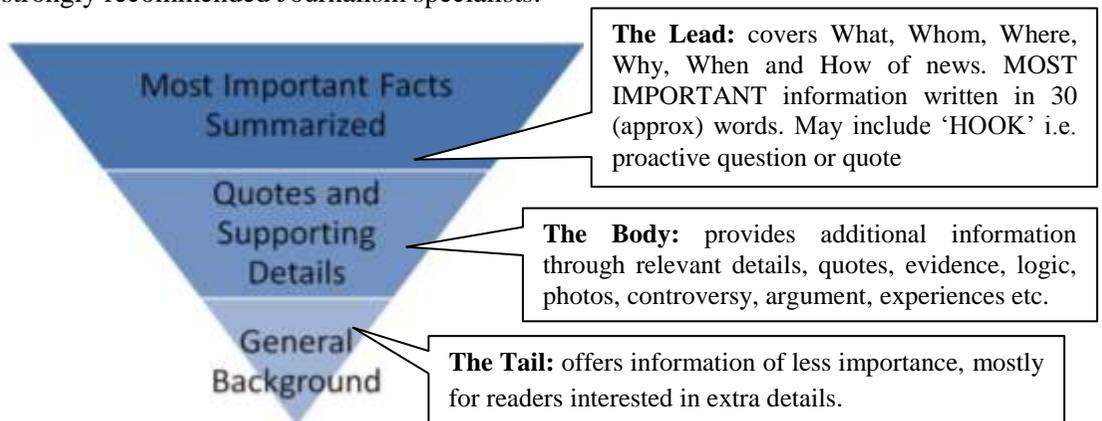


Fig. 1.2: Inverted pyramid style of writing the news articles

B. Writing news headline: The headline is an abstract sentence generally consists of five to ten words. It is an imitation of compete thought of reporter

which mainly includes subject and verb. The precision is the prerequisite for writing headlines. The words in a headline must represent accurately and exactly what is in the story. The ABC formula is guiding principle in the field of journalism, i.e. Accuracy, Clarity and Brevity. Some tips for writing good headline are;

- Headline should be a meaningful statement
- Writer/reporter must comprehend story completely
- The headline must be a crux of leads' idea
- Don't write anything in headline which is irrelevant to article
- Repetition of exact wording/phrases from article should not come into headline
- Headline should be unambiguous,
- Thoughts, implications and double meanings must be kept away

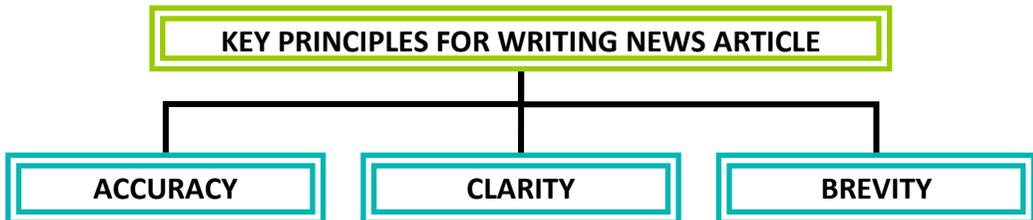


Fig. 1.3: Key principles for writing News article

C. Essentials of Writing Lead:

The lead or opening paragraph is the most important part of any news story. Lead is the primary concern for all news writers.

- It should be straight, simple and attention-grabbing.
- Lead must answer 5 Ws and 1 H of news story.
- Use active sentences and strong verbs for lively and interesting lead.
- It should establish the voice and direction of an article.
- Lead must focus the all vital elements in the story.
- Lead must catch the mind of the reader by arousing an interest.
- The lead should cover the newsworthy facet of story.
- The lead sentences should be short i.e. not more than 12-15 words.
- Sentence arrangement must be orderly and relevant to theme.
- Use simple and lucid grammar in lead paragraphs.
- Lead should compel the reader to read the remaining article.

Lead can be generally divided into two categories i.e.

- a. **Hard Lead:** It is direct and suited for an urgent, breaking event.
- b. **Soft Lead:** It is more indirect and suited to feature writing.

Sr. No.	Type of News Lead	Description and Details
1.	Quick burst lead	A series of terse, direct statements, much like a how-to article opening
2.	Punch lead	It uses strong verbs and short sentences that are meant to create an impact, to give jolt to readers
3.	Surprise lead	Includes an element of surprise in beginning
4.	Contrast lead	Makes a point by opening with differences or opposites
5.	Figurative lead	Use a figure of speech when opening with this lead
6.	Allusion lead	Opens story with a reference to classic literature
7.	Expert lead	Opens lead with a quote from an expert
8.	Suspense lead	Uses an open-ended beginning to create suspense
9.	Question lead	Opens lead by asking question
10.	Summary lead	Just states the facts which include who, where, what, when, why and how about event or happening

Table 1.1: Types of popular lead writing styles in journalism

D. Body of news article: The rest of a news story is called the body. Body supports the lead and gives all important information in inverted pyramid style. Facts and quotes are arranged from most important to least important sequence. Body have a theme paragraph that spells out the sub-themes of article in greater detail. Each sub-theme is backed up with background facts and relevant quotations. Body written in sequential order is easier to write and understand.

- Write body of news article after writing lead
- Prepare an outline for the body
- Proceed in a natural way of logical writing and chronological order
- Keep paragraphs short and simple one idea at a time
- Use simple and lucid language, small sentences.
- Connect all paragraphs with logical and relevant transitions.

E. Add the Tail:

Inverted pyramids stories don't need a strong ending since those hard news stories simply end when there is nothing more to say. In case of scientifically oriented news articles writer can end with catchy quote which recapitulates the entire story. Some time story could be end by writing future implication which relates the story back to the main theme and leaves the reader thinking about the essence of the story. At the end of the story, writers must avoid preaching or lecturing.

Precautions to be taken before reporting News article:

- i. Check the accuracy of information from all sources to avoid error.
- ii. When mistakes are made, they must be corrected - fully and quickly.
- iii. Identify sources whenever possible so that the public has as much information possible to determine the sources' reliability.
- iv. Strive to quote sources accurately and in the proper context.
- v. Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting.
- vi. Examine your own cultural values and avoid imposing those values on others.
- vii. Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, disability, physical appearance or social status.
- viii. Support the open exchange of views.
- ix. Never knowingly introduce false information into material intended for publication or broadcast.
- x. Never alter photo, video, or image content.
- xi. Use of any non-traditional methods of gathering information should be explained as part of the story.
- xii. Rely on the most up-to-date and accurate research when gathering facts for a story.
- xiii. Never plagiarize.
- xiv. Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
- xv. Understand the importance of ensuring privacy
- xvi. Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived.
- xvii. Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility of writer.

Essential habits of Good Writer	Essential Virtues of Good Researcher	Virtues of Good Scientist
Proactiveness	Articulate a vision	Open minded
Begin with the end in mind	Passionate about science	Keen observer
Put first things first	Works hard at communication	Resourceful
Think win-win situation	Generous and think to support others	Perseverance
Seek first to understand, then to be understood	Risk takers – accept failure	Inquisitive
Synergize the energy	Resilient to keep on going	Brave - bold
Always look for ways to learn new skills	Self-examining and adaptive.	Unbiased
Write daily	Seek solutions	Curious of everything
Focus fully on your draft	Sense of humour - fun or <i>some</i> kind of charisma	Zeal for learning
Write quickly and with intensity	Very persistent	Habit of multi angle analysis
Set ambitious but achievable goals	Self-motivated and independent people	Never frustrated
Finish what you start and submit what you finish	Don't believe in short-cuts	Acknowledges work of others
Believe you can do it	Whole world is like an open library for researchers	Honest in the collection and analysis of data
Writes for well being	Patience - endurance	Humanitarian
		Imagination

Table 1.2: Qualities and traits to be developed among researchers

KVK functionaries are engaged in various activities like Extension, research, coordination, reporting, training manpower for which they need qualities of researcher. The above listed traits are just guidelines and may vary person to person. From the above table, it is obvious that habits required for becoming good writer are different from habits and virtues of research professionals. In lieu of above discussion, one should develop mix of set of mentioned qualities to become researcher as well as good writer.

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